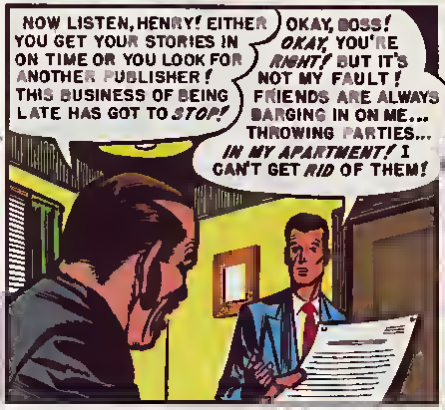
HORROR
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC
THE VAULT OF HORROR
NO.15
OCT-NOV
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC
REPRINT EDITION
HORROR®
ABNER DOON
BORN 1893
DIED 3044
REST
THE VAULT-KEEPER
JOHNNY CRAIG

THE VAULT OF HORROR!



AT HOME AGAIN, HENRY DAVIDSON SITS AT HIS TYPEWRITER...
I HAVE A TERRIFIC PLOT FOR THIS NEXT HORROR STORY! IF ONLY I'M NOT INTERRUPTED— HANG IT ALL! THERE'S THE DOORBELL!
RING! RING!
HIYA, HENRY, OLD BOY! THOUGHT I'D BRING THE GANG OVER! HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A COUPLE OF DAYS!
OH, NO!
DON'T LET US BOTHER YOU, HENRY, IF YOU'RE BUSY! YOU GO RIGHT AHEAD AND WORK, DAHLING!
HEY! WHERE'S YOUR LIQUOR, HENRY?
OH, I BET YOU SAY THAT TO ALL THE GIRLS...
THROW BACK THE RUG! I FEEL LIKE DANCING!
HENRY! YOU OLD MEANY! WHY HAVEN'T I SEEN MORE OF YOU?
LOOK, HENRY! I GOT A TERRIFIC STORY FOR YOU! THERE'S THIS GUY, SEE...
WELL, THAT DOES IT! I CAN'T TAKE ANYMORE OF THIS! IF THEY LIKE MY APARTMENT SO MUCH, THEY CAN HAVE IT! I'LL JUST PACK UP MY CLOTHES AND TYPEWRITER... AND LEAVE!
LEAVING SO SOON, FELLAH? CAN'T SAY I BLAME YOU! THE GUY WHO LIVES HERE SURE IS STINGY WITH HIS DRINKS!
SOME HOURS LATER...
I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS LONG AGO! I'LL FIND SOME QUIET PLACE HERE IN THE COUNTRY WHERE I WON'T BE DISTURBED AND... HEY..
THAT HOUSE! IT'S PERFECT! JUST WHAT I NEED! WHY, I BET I COULD WRITE SENSATIONAL HORROR STORIES WITH ALL THAT MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE! I'LL BUY IT!
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LATER, AT A REAL ESTATE AGENT'S OFFICE IN TOWN..
YOU... YOU WANT TO BUY MILLFORD MANOR? BUT... NOBODY WANTS TO BUY THAT HOUSE! IT'S... IT'S HAUNTED!
HAUNTED! HA! HA! WHAT NONSENSE! THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS HOUSES REALLY BEING HAUNTED! I'LL BUY IT RIGHT NOW!
...AND AT THE GENERAL STORE WHILE BUYING FOOD...
MILLFORD MANOR? GLORY BE, STRANGER! ARE YE DAFT? DON'T YE KNOW THAT PLACE IS HAUNTED?
DON'T TELL ME YOU BELIEVE THOSE OLD WIVES' TALES. HA! HA! WELL, I MAY WRITE GHOST AND HORROR STORIES, BUT I DON'T HAVE TO BELIEVE 'EM!
AH... I'M ALL SET! PLENTY OF FOOD, TYPEWRITER RIBBON, PAPER!.. THIS IS GOING TO BE GREAT! I CAN'T WAIT TO BEGIN WRITING!
BY CANDLELIGHT, HENRY WORKS ON HIS LATEST STORY. HARDLY DOES HE TAKE TIME OUT TO EAT AND SLEEP, SO ENTHUSED IS HE..! THE DAYS PASS....
FINISHED! AND IN RECORD TIME, TOO! AH! I KNEW THIS PLACE WAS PERFECT FOR ME, THE MINUTE I SAW IT!
THIS IS THE BEST STORY I'VE EVER WRITTEN! BOY! WON'T MY BOSS BE SURPRISED? WHA... SOMEONE AT THE DOOR...
HIYA, HENRY, OLD BOY!
THOUGHT YOU'D LOSE US BY HIBERNATING, EH?
YOU NAUGHTY BOY! HOW COULD YOU DESERT US LIKE THAT? YOU MUST COME BACK TO THE CITY, HENRY! YOU SIMPLY MUST!
RETURN TO THE CITY? NOT ON YOUR LIFE! I'VE FOUND A HOME HERE, AND HERE I STAY!
BUT... BUT HOW CAN ANYONE LIVE IN A GLOOMY OLD PLACE LIKE THIS? IT'S... IT'S AWFUL!
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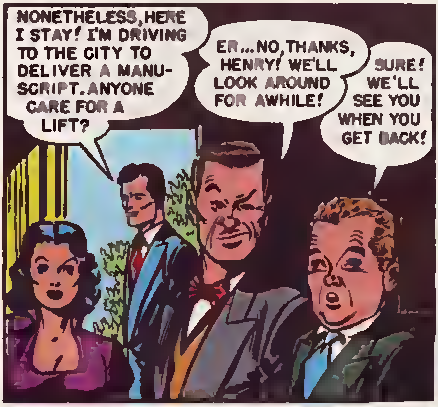
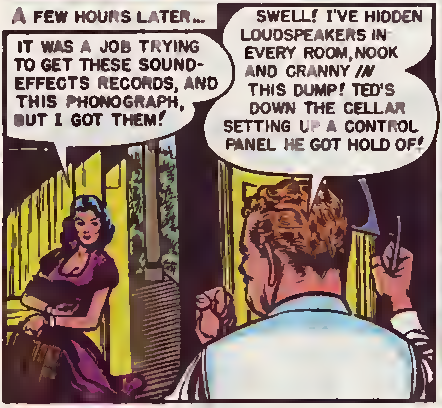
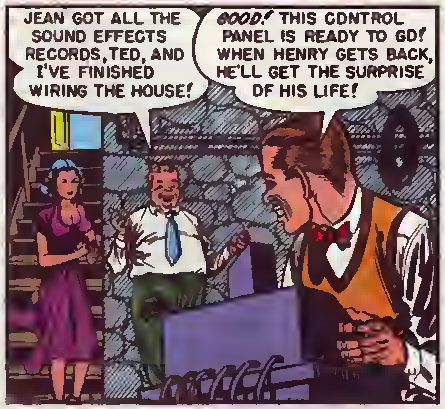
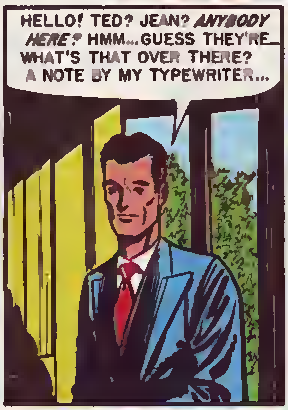

NONETHELESS, HERE I STAY! I'M DRIVING TO THE CITY TO DELIVER A MANUSCRIPT. ANYONE CARE FOR A LIFT?
ER... NO, THANKS, HENRY! WE'LL LOOK AROUND FOR AWHILE!
SURE! WE'LL SEE YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK!

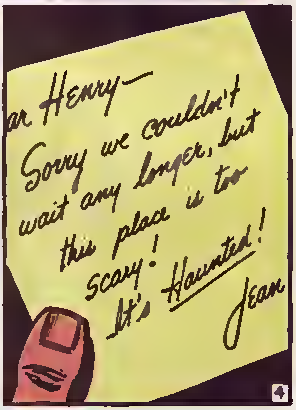
HE'S GONE!
BOY! HAVE I AN IDEA! I KNOW HOW WE CAN GET HENRY BACK TO THE CITY FOR GOOD! NOW, LISTEN! HERE'S WHAT WE DO...


A FEW HOURS LATER...
IT WAS A JOB TRYING TO GET THESE SOUND-EFFECTS RECORDS, AND THIS PHONOGRAPH, BUT I GOT THEM!
SWELL! I'VE HIDDEN LOUDSPEAKERS IN EVERY ROOM, NOOK AND CRANNY IN THIS DUMP! TED'S DOWN THE CELLAR SETTING UP A CONTROL PANEL HE GOT HOLD OF!


JEAN GOT ALL THE SOUND EFFECTS RECORDS, TED, AND I'VE FINISHED WIRING THE HOUSE!
GOOD! THIS CONTROL PANEL IS READY TO GO! WHEN HENRY GETS BACK, HE'LL GET THE SURPRISE OF HIS LIFE!

SURE! HA HA! WE'LL GIVE HIM SUCH A SCARE, HE'LL NEVER WANT TO SEE THIS PLACE AGAIN! HA! HA! HA!
SHH! I HEAR HIS CAR PULLING UP IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE!


HELLO! TED? JEAN? ANYBODY HERE? HMM... GUESS THEY'RE WHAT'S THAT OVER THERE? A NOTE BY MY TYPEWRITER...


Dear Henry—
Sorry we couldn't wait any longer, but this place is too scary!
It's Haunted!
Jean

HA! HA! HA! HA!
OH, THIS IS RICH! I'VE FINALLY GOTTEN RID OF THEM! THEY'LL NEVER BOTHER ME ANYMORE! HA! HA! THIS HOUSE... HA! HA! HAUNTED! WHAT A LAUGH!
OKAY, JEAN... HE MUST HAVE READ THE NOTE BY NOW! SCREAM RIGHT INTO THE MIKE... LOUD AND SCARY!
EEE-EEE-EEK-KK
MY SON! A SCREAM! SOUNDS LIKE IT CAME FROM UPSTAIRS!
THERE'S NOBODY... NOBODY HERE! HEH... MUST BE MY... IMAGINATION!
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
IMAGINATION? I HEAR FOOT-STEPS! COMING UP THE STAIRS! COMING TOWARD ME!
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUM
I... I CAN HEAR THE STEPS! SOMEONE... SOMETHING IS COMING UP THE STAIRS! I CAN NEAR IT... BUT I CAN'T SEE IT!
STOP! GO AWAY! STAY AWAY FROM ME!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
I'LL BET HE'S SCARED STIFF! GET THAT RATTLING CHAINS RECORD READY!
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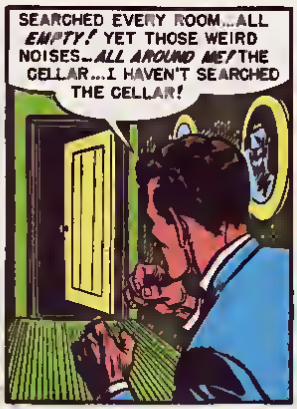
WHA...WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? CHAINS RATTLING ALL AROUND ME! MOANS...SHRIEKING! I'M... I'M GOING *CRAZY!* THIS PLACE *IS* HAUNTED!
RATTLE! RATTLE!
OOOOHWW
THUMP! CLANK RATTLE!

...GOT TO KEEP CALM! LOOK IN EVERY ROOM! THOSE... THOSE SOUNDS! *WHERE ARE THEY COMING FROM?*


SEARCHED EVERY ROOM...ALL *EMPTY!* YET THOSE WEIRD NOISES...*ALL AROUND ME!* THE CELLAR...I HAVEN'T SEARCHED THE CELLAR!

YAAAAAGGHH!

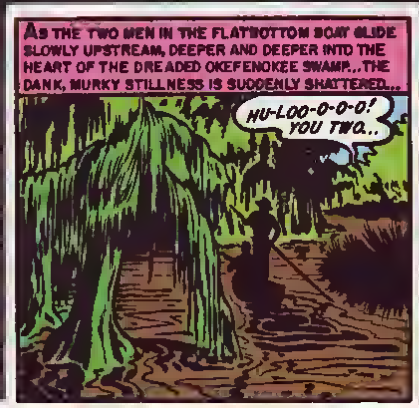
HELP! GHOSTS! SPOOKS! THE HOUSE IS HAUNTED!
HELP!

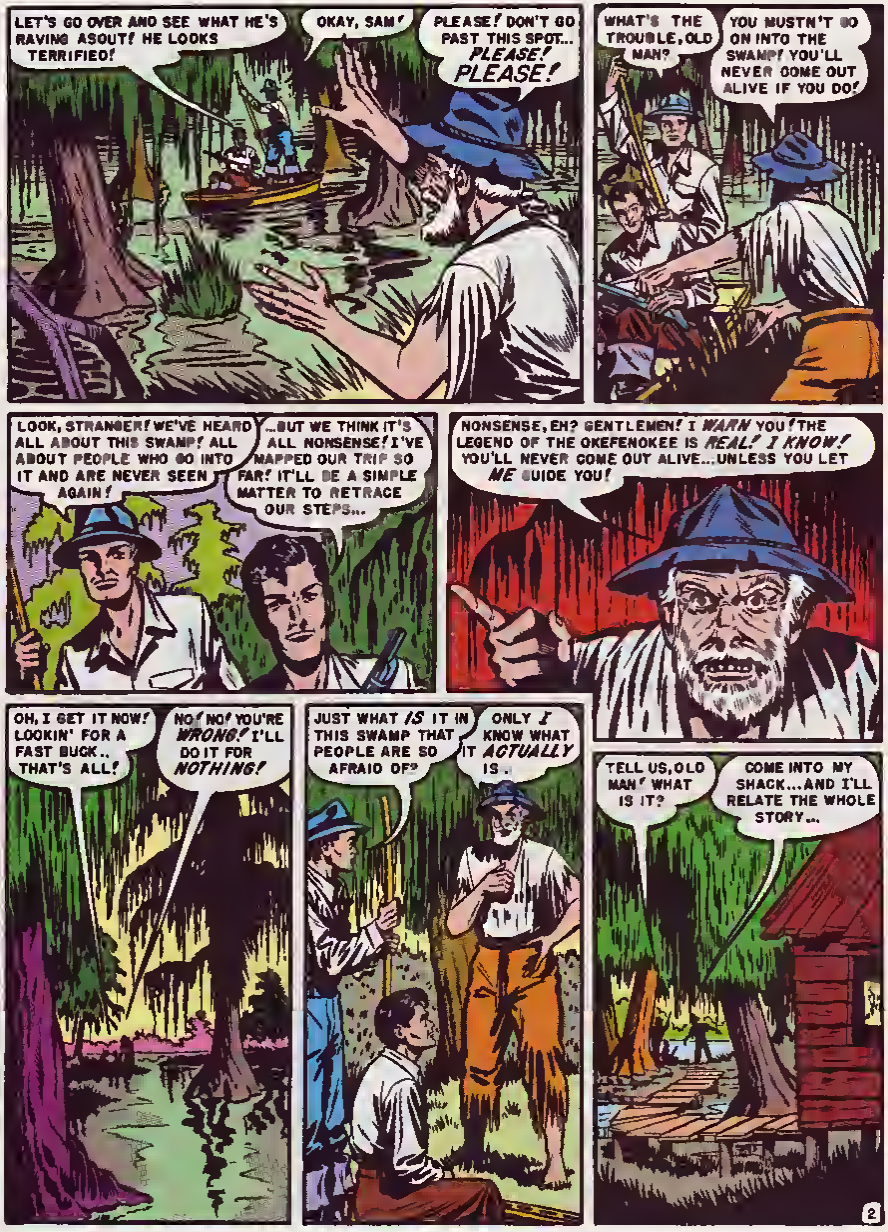
HA! HA! HA! HA! TED, YOU WERE A *RIOT* IN THAT SHEET! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIS FACE!
HE TORE OUT OF HERE... SO *FAST!* HA! HA! HA!
T...TED... TED, LOOK! *LOOK!*

WHA... WHAT IS IT? IT'S COMING *TOWARD* US! *NO! NO! STOP! KEEP BACK! STAY AWAY!*

A FEW HOURS LATER, HENRY RETURNS...WITH THE CONSTABLE AND HIS DEPUTIES...
CONFOUND IT! EVERYONE TOLD YOU THE PLACE WAS HAUNTED!
OKAY! OKAY! JUST HELP ME GET MY TYPEWRITER AND CLOTHES! I'LL GO AND...SAY! WHAT'S THAT IN THE DRIVEWAY?
GOOD LORD! IT'S A MAN! BUT... HIS FACE! LOOK AT HIS FACE!
IT...IT HAS NO... NO FLESH! LIKE SOMETHING HAS EATEN...
CONSTABLE! COME INSIDE! QUICK!
WE FOUND HIM... JUST LIKE THAT!
TED! IT'S TED! THE ONE OUTSIDE MUST BE ROGER! BUT WHERE'S JEAN?
LISTEN! SOMEONE LAUGHING! SOUNDS HYSTERICAL!
...COMING FROM THE CELLAR! C'MON!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
GREAT SCOTT! SHE'S AGED TWENTY YEARS! SHE MUST HAVE SEEN SOMETHING HORRIBLE BEYDHD WORDS TO MAKE HER THE BABBLING LUNATIC WE SEE!
JEAN!
HMPF! CONTROL PANEL...SOUND EFFECTS RECORDS! THEY TRIED TO SCARE ME INTO RETURNING TO THE CITY!
...ONLY THEIR LITTLE PLAN BACKFIRED! JUST WHAT DID HAPPEN, WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER KNOW!
HENRY RETURNS TO THE CITY WHERE THE GANG STILL WHOOP IT UP! ONLY NOW HENRY ENJOYS IT...HE DOESN'T LIKE BEING ALONE ANYMORE!
HEH, HEH, HEH! WELL, READERS, DID YOU LIKE MY AMUSING LITTLE TALE? I HOPE SO! TO THIS DAY NO ONE KNOWS WHAT EVIL IS POSSESSED BY THAT HORROR HOUSE! HEH! BUT IF YOU WANT ANOTHER STORY... HEH! JUST READ ON!

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!




LET'S GO OVER AND SEE WHAT HE'S RAVING ASOUT! HE LOOKS TERRIFIED!
OKAY, SAM!
PLEASE! DON'T GO PAST THIS SPOT... PLEASE! PLEASE!
WHAT'S THE TROUBLE, OLD MAN?
YOU MUSTN'T GO ON INTO THE SWAMP! YOU'LL NEVER COME OUT ALIVE IF YOU DO!
LOOK, STRANGER! WE'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT THIS SWAMP! ALL ABOUT PEOPLE WHO GO INTO IT AND ARE NEVER SEEN AGAIN!
...BUT WE THINK IT'S ALL NONSENSE! I'VE MAPPED OUR TRIP SO FAR! IT'LL BE A SIMPLE MATTER TO RETRACE OUR STEPS...
NONSENSE, EH? GENTLEMEN! I WARN YOU! THE LEGEND OF THE OKEFENOKEE IS REAL! I KNOW! YOU'LL NEVER COME OUT ALIVE...UNLESS YOU LET ME GUIDE YOU!
OH, I GET IT NOW! LOOKIN' FOR A FAST BUCK.. THAT'S ALL!
NO! NO! YOU'RE WRONG! I'LL DO IT FOR NOTHING!
JUST WHAT IS IT IN THIS SWAMP THAT PEOPLE ARE SO AFRAID OF?
ONLY I KNOW WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS..
TELL US, OLD MAN! WHAT IS IT?
COME INTO MY SHACK...AND I'LL RELATE THE WHOLE STORY...
2

THE OLD MAN LEADS THE OTHER TWO INTO HIS CRUDE HUT! THEY SEAT THEMSELVES ON ROUGHLY HEWN CHAIRS! THEN THE OLD ONE BEGINS TO SPEAK...

ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, THREE PEOPLE CAME TO THIS PART OF THE OKEFENOKEE... THREE SCIENTISTS! ONE WAS MIDDLE-AGED, ONE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN, HIS DAUGHTER, AND THE THIRD... A YOUNG MAN... THE GIRL'S FIANCEE...

"THEY HAD A *DREAM*, THESE THREE! THEY WERE GOING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM THAT HAD *BAFFLED* SCIENCE FOR *CENTURIES*! THEY WERE GOING TO SOLVE THE SECRET OF *LIFE*...!"

BUT, WHY *THIS* GOD-FORSAKEN PLACE, FATHER?

HERE, WE CAN WORK UNDISTURBED BY OUTSIDERS, MARIE! NO PUBLICITY... NO REPORTERS... NO PRYING EYES!

YES, MARIE! AFTER ALL, WE WOULD RECEIVE A GREAT DEAL OF CRITICISM! TO *CREATE* LIVING MATTER... TO CREATE *LIFE*... IS SOMTHING THAT IS CONSIDERED *BEYOND* THE REALM OF SCIENCE...

SO YOU SEE, MARIE, WE MUST SEPARATE OURSELVES FROM SOCIETY... AT LEAST FOR A WHILE...

"AND SO, PROFESSOR CARL WARD, MARIE WARD AND ROBERT COLBY SET TO WORK, BUILDING A LABORATORY... HERE... HERE IN THE OKEFENOKEE...

AT LAST... WE ARE FINISHED!

NOW WE CAN UNPACK OUR EQUIPMENT... ALL OUR APPARATUS... AND BEGIN OUR WORK!

"THEIR EXPERIMENTING BEGAN..."

WE *KNOW* WHAT PROTOPLASM... LIVING TISSUE... CONTAINS! WE HAVE ANALYZED IT AND WE KNOW *EVERY* CHEMICAL... IN ITS *PROPER PROPORTION*! AND YET WHEN WE PLACE THEM TOGETHER... COMBINE THEM... THEY DO NOT BEGIN TO ..TO .. *LIVE*! THERE IS ONE 'ELEMENT' MISSING...

THE SPARK OF LIFE, EH, PROFESSOR?

EXACTLY! WE ARE LACKING A CERTAIN 'CONDITION'! A CERTAIN STIMULUS!

PERHAPS.. ELECTRICITY, FATHER? PERHAPS IF WE *SHOCKED* THIS COMBINATION OF COMPOUNDS AND ELEMENTS... THE LIVING PROCESS WOULD *BEGIN*...

WE WILL TRY IT, MARIE! WE WILL TRY EVERYTHING! THE CONDITION OR STIMULANT IS WHAT WE *MUST* DISCOVER

"IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED...THEY TRIED EVERYTHING!"..
THIS TIME WE'LL TRY .004 MICRO-VOLTS! IF IT DOESN'T WORK...ELECTRICITY AS WE KNOW IT IS NOT THE ANSWER! READY..?
READY!
WHAT DO YOU SEE, ROBERT?
NO SIGN OF LIFE, PROFESSOR!
EXPERIMENT 214! FAILURE!
"FOR FOUR LONG MONTHS, THE THREE SCIENTISTS WORKED...TRIED...FAILED.."
X-RAY, 10,000 VOLTS!
EXPERIMENT 702... FAILURE!!
RADIUM... EXPOSURE... 3 SECONDS AT 2 INCHES...
EXPERIMENT 1045... FAILURE!
INFRA-RED!
URANIUM!
FAILURE!
FAILURE!!
ULTRA-VIOLET!
FAILURE!!
HIGH-FREQUENCY SOUND-WAVES...
IT'S USELESS!! USELESS!!
NO! NO!! DON'T...PROFESSOR WARD!!

IN A FIT OF RAGE, PROFESSOR WARD HAD FLUNG THE BEAKER CONTAINING THEIR PRECIOUS COMBINATIONS OF CHEMICALS THROUGH THE WINDOW INTO THE STAGNANT, MURKY WATERS OF THE SWAMP...

SLOWLY THE BEAKER SANK... AND THE MIXTURE SPREAD OVER THE SURFACE OF THE STILL WATER...

LAZILY... IT DRIFTED ALONG... COMING TO REST NEAR A ROTTED LOG...

AND THEN... IT *HAPPENED!* THERE, IN THE DANK, DARK WATERS OF THE SWAMP, IN THE HEAT... AND THE STENCH... AND THE DAMPNESS... IT *HAPPENED!* UNKNOWN... UNEXPLAINED... THE CONDITION THAT *THEY* HAD TRIED FOR FIVE LONG MONTHS TO CREATE... CAME ABOUT...

IT *LIVED!* THE SMALL MIXTURE OF CHEMICALS AND BASIC ELEMENTS BEGAN TO *LIVE!* A SIMPLE FORM OF LIFE... WITH NO STRUCTURE! JUST A SHAPELESS, AMOEBA-LIKE MASS OF LIVING PROTOPLASM!

AT FIRST, IT REMAINED SMALL, FEEDING ON MICROSCOPIC ORGANISMS! BUT THEN, AS IT GREW... LARGER AND LARGER... IT SEEKED LARGER FOOD... SMALL FISH... INSECTS! IT ENVELOPED THEM... AS AN AMOEBA DOES... SECRETING DIGESTIVE JUICES THAT DISSOLVE THE VICTIMS INTO A FORM MORE EASILY *ABSORBED*...

AND STILL IT GREW, UNCONTROLLED... BIGGER... BIGGER! IT MOVED ABOUT NOW... OUT OF THE WATER ONTO THE LAND... ENVELOPING AND ABSORBING EVERYTHING IN IT'S PATH...

MEANWHILE, PROFESSOR WARD AND HIS DAUGHTER HAD MET WITH A NEW PROBLEM! ROBERT COLBY!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, COLBY?
EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN! I'M QUITTING! THIS...THIS THING WE'RE TRYING TO DO...! IT'S...IT'S... WRONG!
A SCIENTIST...TALKING LIKE THAT! WHAT'S COME OVER YOU, COLBY?
I...I DON'T KNOW! ONLY I'M GETTING OUT... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...
ARE YOU COMING WITH ME, MARIE?
BUT...BUT...BOB!
YOU SEE, MARIE! HE'S TURNED OUT TO BE A SNIVELING COWARD! GO ON...COLBY...GET OUT! A TRUE SCIENTIST IS NEVER AFRAID...OF ANYTHING!
ARE YOU COMING, MARIE?
MY PLACE IS HERE, ROBERT...WITH MY FATHER AND OUR WORK! YOU'D BETTER GO...!
COLBY TURNED AND LEFT! HE CROSSED THE RICKETY WALK FROM THE HOUSE OVER THE SWAMP TO THE BANK! SUDDENLY HE HEARD A TERRIFIED SCREAM
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEK!
WHAT THE...?
WHAT HE SAW MADE HIS BLOOD FREEZE...HIS HAIR STAND ON END! THE LABORATORY WAS COLLAPSING INTO A MASS OF QUIVERING WRITHING LIVING MATTER...
NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE...!

PROFESSOR WARD AND MARIE...BOTH SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY, WERE BEING SUCKED INTO THAT HUGE GLOB OF LIVING MATTER! HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING, COLBY STOOD, TERRIFIED...WATCHING IT ALL...

...AS A FINAL MUFFLED CRY SCARED THROUGH THE SILENT SWAMP...AND THE CLAWING, CLUTCHING HAND OF PROFESSOR WARD DISAPPEARED INTO THE RIPPLING MASS!

SO YOU SEE GENTLEMEN, THAT IS WHAT AWAITS YOU IN THE DEEP DARK DEPTHS OF THE OKEFENOKEE! THE LIFE THAT THEY HAD HELPED TO CREATE, AND THAT HAD DESTROYED PROFESSOR WARD AND HIS DAUGHTER, WAITS TO DESTROY YOU...

THAT'S QUITE A YARN, OLD TIMER, BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND, I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE...

YEAH! LET'S GO SAM!

REMEMBER, GENTLEMEN, I WARNED YOU! YOU SEE...MY NAME IS ROBERT COLBY!

SURE, OLD MAN SURE!

THE TWO MEN PUSH THEIR FLATBOTTOM BOAT OUT INTO THE STREAM...THEIR LAUGHTER DRIFTING ACROSS THE STAGNANT SILENT WATER! SLOWLY, THEY MAKE THEIR WAY UPSTREAM! SUDDENLY...

COLBY! HE SAID HIS NAME WAS *COLBY!* THAT WAS THE NAME OF THE YOUNG SCIENTIST THAT ESCAPED...THE THE...

SAM!! LOOK!!

WHA...? WHY NO...*NO*... *NO!* IT'S... IT'S...THE... THING...

...AND *THAT'S* MY TALE FROM THE *CAULDRON* FOR THIS ISSUE! THE TWO MEN REFUSED TO SWALLOW OLD COLBY'S STORY...AND SO...HEH-HEH. *THEY* GOT SWALLOWED UP INSTEAD SEE YOU NEXT ISSUE! BYE-NOW!

THIS IS THE STORY OF A STRANGE CLUB*. . . AND A STILL STRANGER INITIATION! I CALL THIS TALE. . . A

REPORT FROM THE GRAVE

*THIS CLUB WAS NAMED AFTER ME, ALTHOUGH I *DID NOT* AND *DO NOT NOW* SANCTION ITS STRANGE POLICIES! V.K.

MY STORY BEGINS ON A DARK NIGHT, AT THE HOME OF *FRED COOMBES*, THE TOWN *UNDERTAKER*...

GENTLEMEN! AS *PRESIDENT* OF THE *VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB*, I HEREBY CALL THIS MEETING TO ORDER! AS YOU ALL KNOW, WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO INITIATE A *NEW* MEMBER INTO OUR HORROR CLUB TO *REPLACE* POOR OLD *WILLY BALM*, WHO *DIED SUDDENLY* LAST MONTH...

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS DECIDED UPON A SUITABLE INITIATION! OUR PROSPECTIVE MEMBER... *MR. WARREN LAKE*. . . WILL, AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT, ENTER FAIRHAVEN CEMETERY AND PROCEED TO *EXHUME THE BODY* OF OUR LATE DEPARTED MEMBER!

WHAT?

PLEASE DO NOT INTERRUPT UNTIL I HAVE FINISHED! UPON UNEARTHING THE BODY, THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER WILL NOTE THE TIME UPON THE DEAD MEMBER'S WATCH! HE WILL THEN REPORT BACK HERE TO US! I, HAVING SET UP POOR WILLY'S FUNERAL, WILL KNOW IF MR. LAKE HAS FULFILLED HIS MISSION!
NO! I'M AGAINST IT! THE WHOLE IDEA IS REVOLTING! IT IS NOT THE PURPOSE OF THIS CLUB TO SUBJECT PEOPLE TO SUCH A HORRIBLE ORDEAL!
LISTEN TO VARDY! SINCE WHEN DID YOU GET SO HIGH AND MIGHTY, VARD?
I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT, THAT'S ALL!
ALL RIGHT, GENTLEMEN! I'LL PUT IT TO A VOTE! ALL IN FAVOR OF THE INITIATION...?
ALL HANDS BUT ONE GO UP!
SORRY, VARD! YOU'RE OUTNUMBERED! THE INITIATION STANDS! YOU'LL FIND A SPADE IN MY GARAGE, MR. LAKE!
DON'T BE TOO NERVOUS, LAKE! AFTER ALL... WHAT HARM CAN A STIFF DO?
THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OF THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB TURNS AND LEAVES THE ASSEMBLAGE, HORROR AND TERROR ON HIS PALED FACE...
HAW-HAW!
TAKE IT EASY, WARREN!
GIVE MY REGARDS TO OL' WILLY!
GULP
AS THE LAST STROKE OF TWELVE DIES AWAY, THE RUSTY GATE OF FAIRHAVEN CEMETERY SQUEAKS OPEN...
THERE'S...REALLY NO REASON... TO BE... FRIGHTENED! I... I WONDER IF JOINING THE CLUB IS...WORTH ALL... GULP THIS?
WARREN LAKE...PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OF THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB...MAKES HIS WAY SLOWLY OVER THE SOFT, SILENT EARTH AND STOPS BEFORE A RATHER NEW-LOOKING HEADSTONE...
THIS IS IT! WILLIAM BALM, BORN... JULY 9TH, 1922. ..DIED... JULY 2, 1950!
WELL, I MIGHT AS WELL BEGIN...
2

THE THICK SILENCE THAT HANGS OVER THE GRAVEYARD LIKE A BLACK SHROUD IS NOW SHATTERED BY THE SOUND OF WARREN LAKE'S DIGGING...
THE EARTH IS STILL SOFT...AFTER ONLY A MONTH...
AN HOUR PASSES! THEN TWO! SUDDENLY THE HOLLOW BOOM OF SPADE STRIKING COFFIN ECHOES FROM GRAVESTONE TO GRAVESTONE...
NOT MUCH MORE TO GO...THANK GOODNESS, TOO! I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL...KINDA...SHAKY!
THE DIRT IS CLEARED FROM THE TOP OF THE COFFIN, AND WARREN PRIES THE LID OPEN...
GOOD LORD!
QUICKY WARREN SCAMPERS FROM THE YAWNING BLACK CAVERN HE HAS DUG, AND BREATHLESSLY BEGINS TO SHOVEL THE DIRT BACK INTO THE BATTERED CASKET...
HMMPH! SOME...PRACTICAL...JOKE...NO DOUBT!
AT ABOUT THREE A.M., WARREN LAKE AGAIN ENTERS THE HOME OF FRED COOMBES...
WELL, MR. LAKE? DID YOU NOTE THE TIME...
NUH! SOME BIG JOKE YOU GUYS PULLED! OKAY... SO I'M LAUGHING!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? JUST TELL US THE TIME ON POOR WILLY'S WATCH AND YOU'LL...
AW, CUT IT OUT, FRED! THAT CORPSE DIDN'T HAVE A WATCH... OR A DROP OF FLESH, EITHER!
WHAT?
YOU HEARD ME! THERE WAS NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF RAGS AND BONES IN THAT COFFIN! LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY'S MOVED THE TOMBSTONE!
3

AND... IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, LOOK FOR YOURSELVES!
C'MON, MEN! LET'S SEE WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!
NO! I DON'T THINK WE OUGHT TO! SOMETHING TELLS ME...
THE REST OF THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB SHOUTS DOWN VARDY'S OBJECTION, AND THEY PROCEED TO FAIRHAVEN CEMETERY!
THERE!
THIS IS WILLY'S GRAVE, ALL RIGHT! I REMEMBER THE LOCATION WELL!
AND IT'S BEEN FRESHLY DUG, TOO!
MAYBE LAKE WASN'T KIDDING! LET'S SEE!
ANXIOUS HANDS START TO DIG, AND SOON...
THERE'S THE COFFIN!
WHY, THAT'S NOT THE COFFIN WILLY WAS BURIED IN!
...AND THIS ISN'T WILLY! I WOULD JUDGE THIS PERSON TO HAVE BEEN DEAD FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS!
LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S PULLED A SWITCH...
SOMEONE WHO HAD SOMETHING TO HIDE...
ALL EYES TURN TO THE ONE CALLED VARDY...
WHY DID YOU OBJECT SO STRENUOUSLY TO DIGGING UP WILLY'S BODY, VARDY?
WHY ..I... I...
YOU WERE HIS ROOMMATE, WEREN'T YOU, VARDY?
AND YOU DISCOVERED HIS BODY, DIDN'T YOU?
VARDY! YOU MURDERED WILLY, DIDN'T YOU?
4

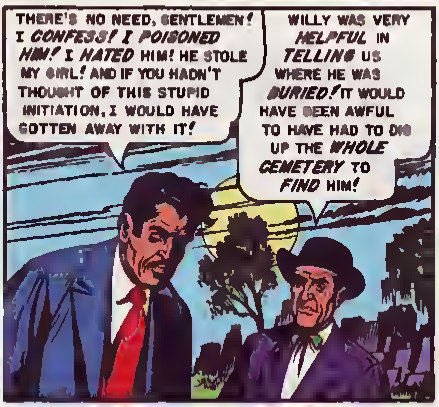
NO! NO! I DIDN'T...
HE WAS TAKING OUT YOUR GIRL...
SHE BROKE HER ENGAGEMENT WITH YOU...
YOU WERE ANGRY...
NO... NO...
YOU POISONED HIM...
AND... I NEVER QUESTIONED THAT HIS DEATH WAS ANYTHING BUT NATURAL!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, DOC! WE ALL THOUGHT SO...
TALK, VARDY! TELL US!
TELL US OR WE'LL...WE'LL...
YOU'LL WHAT!
YOU HAVEN'T ANYTHING ON ME! YOU CAN'T PROVE A THING! GO AHEAD! FIND WILLY'S BODY! GO AHEAD! THERE'S THE CEMETERY! GO DIG UP ALL THE GRAVES...HAW... HAW...
WHY, YOU DIRTY MURDERING...
SUDDENLY, FROM FAR ACROSS THE TOMBSTONES, COMES A DULL REPORT... A THUD... AS IF FROM BELOW THE GROUND...
WHAT WAS THAT?
SOUNDED LIKE A MUFFLED EXPLOSION!
LOOK!
6

GOOD LORD! THAT HEAD-STONE TOPPLED OVER...
AND THE GRAVE'S CRACKED OPEN...
NO! NO!

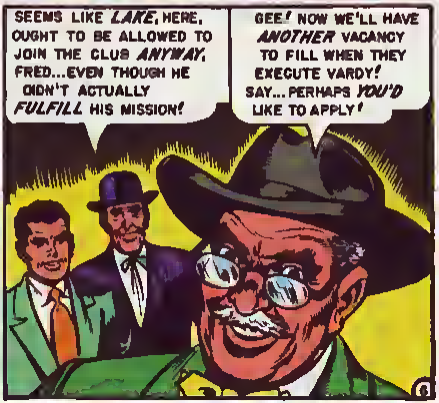
SOMEBODY GRAB VARDY! THE REST OF YOU COME WITH ME! I THINK I KNOW WHAT THAT WAS!
OKAY, VARDY! DON'T TRY ANY-THING!

GENTLEMEN! I STRONGLY SUSPECT THAT UNDER THIS CRACKED GRAVE, WE WILL FIND THE BODY OF WILLIE BALM... WHERE VARDY HID IT...

THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB SETS TO WORK DIGGING AGAIN...
LOOK AT THIS! THE CASKET'S SPLINTERED!
SOMEBODY CALL THE POLICE! I'M GOING TO REQUEST AN AUTOPSY!


THERE'S NO NEED, GENTLEMEN! I CONFESS! I POISONED HIM! I HATED HIM! HE STOLE MY GIRL! AND IF YOU HADN'T THOUGHT OF THIS STUPID INITIATION, I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT!
WILLY WAS VERY HELPFUL IN TELLING US WHERE HE WAS BURIED! IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AWFUL TO HAVE HAD TO DIG UP THE WHOLE CEMETERY TO FIND HIM!

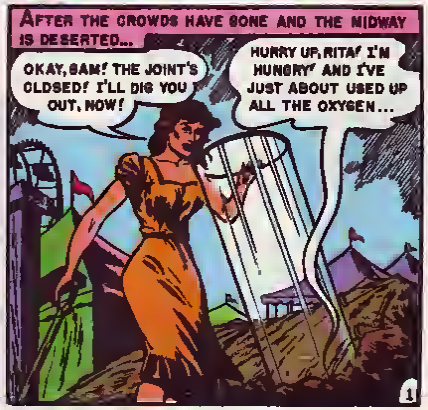
BY THE WAY, FRED, JUST HOW DID THAT EXPLOSION HAPPEN?
SIMPLE! I MUST ADMIT IT'S ALL MY FAULT! IN MY TWELVE YEARS OF UNDERTAKING, I NEVER BEFORE MADE SUCH A MISTAKE! I NEGLECTED TO DRILL HOLES IN THE CASKET TO ALLOW THE GASES FROM THE DECOMPOSING BODY TO ESCAPE! WHEN THE PRESSURE BUILT UP..
POOF!


SEEMS LIKE LAKE, HERE, OUGHT TO BE ALLOWED TO JOIN THE CLUB ANYWAY, FRED...EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T ACTUALLY FULFILL HIS MISSION!
GEE! NOW WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER VACANCY TO FILL WHEN THEY EXECUTE VARDY! SAY... PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO APPLY!

COME NOW, TO A CARNIVAL... TRAVELING FROM TOWN TO TOWN... AND I WILL SHOW YOU AN INTERESTING EXHIBIT CALLED...

BURIED ALIVE!

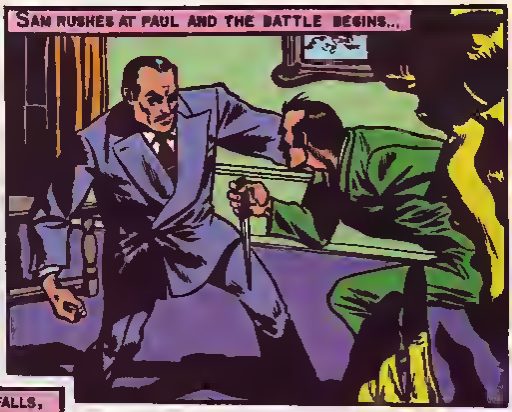
ANOTHER SUSPENSTORY FROM THE VAULT OF HORROR!



RITA SPADES AWAY THE LOOSE DIRT OVER THE GREAT ZOBO...
WHEW! BOY, IT WAS HOT DOWN THERE TODAY! MADE IT TOUGH ON MY "SHALLOW-BREATHING"!
TAKE IT EASY, SAM! I'LL BE SEEING YOU!
WHERE YOU GOIN', RITA?
WHY...NOWHERE! I... I'M JUST GONNA TAKE A WALK... THAT'S ALL!
RITA SAUNTERS AWAY UP THE DARKENED MIDWAY...
SEEMS TO ME SHE'S BEEN WALKIN' A LOT LATELY! I'LL FOLLOW HER TONIGHT...
SAM...THE GREAT ZOBO...TAILS RITA TO THE HIGHWAY...
HOP IN, RITA! YOU LOOK GOOD TONIGHT!
I FEEL GOOD, PAUL! LET'S GO SOMEPLACE AND DANCE!
SO...THAT'S THE SCORE! THAT NO-GOOD DAME...SHE'S TWO-TIMING ME!?
ENRAGED, SAM RETURNS TO HIS TENT...AND WAITS! ABOUT THREE IN THE MORNING, RITA COMES IN...
WHERE YA BEEN? AN' DON'T LIE T'ME! I SAW YOU WITH THAT DUDE IN THE FLASHY CONVERTIBLE! SO THAT'S THE THANKS I GET FOR TAKIN' YOU OFF THE STREETS!
WAIT, SAM! I CAN EXPLAIN!
ALL RIGHT! GO 'HEAD! TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS... IF YOU CAN!
I'M DOIN' IT FOR US SAM. YOU AN' ME! I GOT A PLAN... AND WHEN WE'RE THROUGH, OUR CARNY DAYS'LL BE OVER! WE CAN GET MARRIED LIKE YOU WANT!
MAKE IT GOOD, RITA, OR S'HELP ME, I'LL...
LISTEN, WILL YOU! I GOT THIS GUY ON A STRING! I TOLD HIM YOU AN' ME WERE MARRIED BUT THAT I'M TIRED OF YOU! HE'S RICH, SAM! HE CAN BE TAKEN FOR PLENTY! HERE'S MY PLAN...
2

SUSPICIOUSLY, SAM LISTENS AS NITA UNFOLDS HER DIABOLICAL SCHEME...
AN' THEN YOU BUST IN... AND WHEN HE SLUGS YOU, YOU FLOP AND START THAT SHALLOW-BREATHING OF YOURS! HE'LL THINK HE KILLED YOU... AN' THEN I'LL GET HIM TO BURY YOU! LATER, I'LL COME DIG YOU UP! WE'LL BLACKMAIL HIM FOR PLENTY!
HE'LL THINK YOU'RE DEAD AND HE'LL PAY OFF TO SAVE HIMSELF FROM SCANDAL! HOW'S IT SOUND?
SOUNDS OKAY, NITA! ONLY YOU GOTTA GET ME OUT IN LESS THAN AN HOUR! I CAN'T LAST MORE THAN FIFTY-FIVE MINUTES...
...IT WON'T BE LIKE THE SHOW! I WON'T HAVE A COFFIN... I'LL BE IN DIRT AND I CAN ONLY LAST FIFTY-FIVE MINUTES WITH THE AIR IN MY LUNGS!
DON'T WORRY, SAM! I'LL GET YOU OUT IN TIME! THEN YOU AN' ME... WE'LL BE ON EASY STREET!
THE NEXT NIGHT, WHEN NITA'S SCHEME IS TO TAKE PLACE...
HOP IN, NITA! I LET THE SERVANTS OFF TONIGHT! HOW ABOUT COMING TO MY PLACE?
WHY THAT'LL BE NEAT NICE... PAUL! NICE AND COZY!
PAUL DRIVES NITA TO HIS PALATIAL ESTATE...
WELL, NITA! THIS IS IT! HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, PAUL... JUST BEAUTIFUL!
SO ARE YOU, NITA! I'VE DREAMED ABOUT THIS MOMENT...
PAUL... LET ME GO...
PAUL'S LIPS CLOSE ON NITA'S AS THE DOOR OPENS...
5

I'LL TEACH YOU TO FOOL AROUND WITH MY WIFE...
PAUL! IT'S MY HUSBAND...AND HE'S GOT A KNIFE!


SAM RUSHES AT PAUL AND THE BATTLE BEGINS...

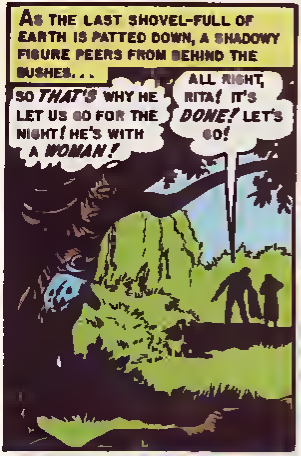
EVERYTHING GOES EXACTLY AS PLANNED! SAM FALLS, STRIKING HIS HEAD...
WHAT?
HE...HE'S DEAD!

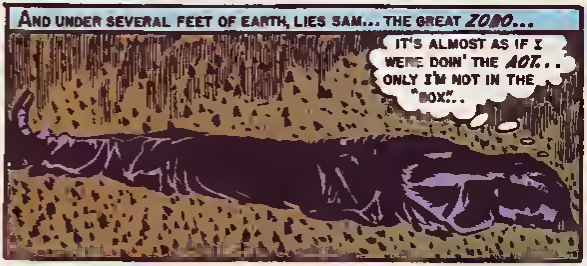
GOOD LORD! YOU'RE RIGHT! HE IS DEAD!
WHAT'LL WE DO, PAUL? WHAT'LL WE DO?

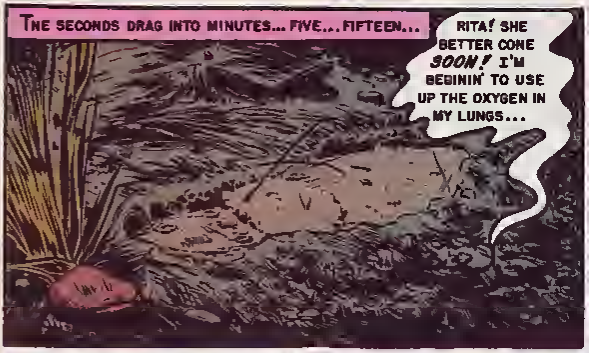
DEAD! I...I'M A MURDERER! THE SCANDAL...I'LL BE RUINED!

NO, PAUL! WAIT! NO ONE KNOWS HE WAS COMING HERE! GET RID OF HIS BODY! I'LL REPORT HIM MISSING! THEY'LL NEVER SUSPECT YOU!
DO YOU THINK IT WOULD WORK, RITA?

AND SO, PAUL AND RITA CARRY SAM, FEIGNING DEATH BY CONTROLLED "SHALLOW-BREATHING", TO A DESERTED PART OF THE ESTATE...
BURY HIM DEEP, PAUL...VERY DEEP!
DEEP ENOUGH, SO HE'LL SMOTHER TO DEATH...AND THEN I CAN OPERATE ALONE...


AS THE LAST SHOVEL-FULL OF EARTH IS PATTED DOWN, A SHADOWY FIGURE PEERS FROM BEHIND THE BUSHES...
ALL RIGHT, RITA! IT'S DONE! LET'S GO!
SO THAT'S WHY HE LET US GO FOR THE NIGHT! HE'S WITH A WOMAN!


AND UNDER SEVERAL FEET OF EARTH, LIES SAM... THE GREAT ZOMO...
IT'S ALMOST AS IF I WERE DOIN' THE ACT... ONLY I'M NOT IN THE "BOX"...


THE SECONDS DRAG INTO MINUTES... FIVE... FIFTEEN...
RITA! SHE BETTER COME SOON! I'M BEGININ' TO USE UP THE OXYGEN IN MY LUNGS...

MEANWHILE, THE SHADOWY FIGURE HAS FOLLOWED PAUL AND RITA BACK TO THE HOUSE...
NO ONE WILL EVER FIND HIM OUT THERE, PAUL! YOU'RE SAFE!
HIM? THEY MUSTA BURIED SOMEBODY BACK THERE!

AND BACK IN HIS CRUDE GRAVE...
IT'S TIME... AND SHE ISN'T HERE! SHE... SHE NEVER INTENDED TO DIG ME UP! SHE... SHE PLANNED YO LET ME DIE! SHE PLANNED IT THIS WAY! RITA! RITA!

SUDDENLY THE STILLNESS ABOVE SAM IS SHATTERED BY THE SOUNG OF A SPADE... STRIKING THE SOFT EARTH.
HE'S RICH ENOUGH! I COULD GO AWAY! HE'LL PAY WELL! I'VE GOT SOMETNING ON HIM NOW! I'M GOING TO SEE WHO IT IS HE KILLED!

SAM, NOW NEAR UNCONSCIOUSNESS FROM LACK OF AIR, TRIES DESPERATELY TO HOLD ON...
HURRY...HURRY! I'M...GOING... EVERYTHING... BLACK...
THEN...WITH ONE LAST EFFORT, HE PUSHES HIMSELF THROUGH THE DIRT REMAINING OVER HIM...
TH...THANKS, CHUM!
Y-A-A-A-A-A-A-H!
THE FRIGHTENED SERVANT...SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY...SCURRIES AWAY INTO THE NIGHT...
NO...NO... Y-A-A-A-H!
POOR SAP! HE THOUGHT I'D BE A CORPSE! HAH! AND SO DOES RITA...
BACK AT HIS TENT AT THE CARNIVAL, SAM WAITS FOR RITA...
DOUBLE-CROSSIN' WENCH! I'LL...KILL HER OH-OH! HERE SHE COMES...
SAM!
YOU THOUGHT I WAS DEAD, HUH, RITA? YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD IT ALL PLANNED?
NO, SAM, NO! I... I COULDN'T GET AWAY FROM HIM! HE JUST BROUGHT ME BACK! I WAS COMIN' IN FOR A SHOVEL... NOW!
OH, SAM! I THOUGHT I WAS TOO LATE! BUT... NOW WE'RE OKAY! HE... HE'S SCARED STIFF! HE'LL PAY PLENTY!
C'MON, RITA! WE GOTTA PACK OUR STUFF! THE SHOW'S MOVIN' TONIGHT! HELP ME GET THE "BOX" IN THE STATION WAGON...
THE "BOX" IS SAM'S COFFIN, WHERE HE SPENDS EIGHT HOURS EVERY DAY... BURIED ALIVE! FOR TEN CENTS, YOU CAN LOOK DOWN A GLASS TUBE AND SEE HIM IN IT!
OKAY, SAM! EVERYTHING'S STOWED!
GET IN, RITA! LET'S GET GOIN'!

FOR AN HOUR THEY DRIVE! AND THEN SAM TURNS OFF THE HIGHWAY INTO A DARK, DANK, SWAMPY AREA...
SAM! THIS ISN'T THE ROAD!
IT IS FOR YOU, HONEY!
THE LAST ROAD! YOU THOUGHT YOU'D LET ME DIE...EH! WELL...WE'LL SEE HOW YOU LIKE BEING BURIED ALIVE!
SAM! LET ME GO! LET... ME...GO...
FORCING RITA INTO THE "BOX", SAM NAILS THE LID SHUT...
I LAY IN THERE EVERY DAY, RITA! EVERY DAY WHILE YOU PLANNED TO GET RID OF ME...
NO, SAM! NO...
SAM PICKS UP THE BOX AND CARRIES IT TO THE EDGE OF A STRANGE-LOOKING POOL...
NOW YOU'RE GONNA DIE IN THERE, RITA! I'M GONNA DROP YOU INTO THIS QUICKSAND! THEY'LL NEVER FIND YOU, RITA! NEVER!
HAVE MERCY, SAM...
SAM STANDS ON THE EDGE AND DROPS THE COFFIN INTO THE SEATHING SAND...
GOOD-BYE, RITA! GOOD... YAAAAHHHH!
NO! NO...
AS THE COFFIN, HEAVY WITH RITA'S STRUGGLING BODY, PLUNGES INTO THE PUTRID, STENCH-FILLED BOG... SAM FOLLOWS...
MY COAT... I NAILED UP MY COAT!
THE HEAVY "BOX" QUICKLY DISAPPEARS BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE QUICKSAND... AND SOON AFTER...
RITA... HELP ME...I... I...COUGH...CHOKE...GLUGG...NNNMPH...
...SAM AND RITA ARE BURIED ALIVE... FOR THE LAST TIME...
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